

# THE CATHOLIC

QUOD SEMPER, QUOD EQUUM, QUOD AD OMNIBUS CREDITUM EST — WHAT ALWAYS, AND EVERY WHERE, AND BY ALL IS BELIEVED.

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ROBERT SOUTHWELL, S. J. (1595.)

WALTER, AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR THOS. MORE," ET

"And smit with feelings of the olden days,  
Rewave the music of neglected lays."

Daniel, (1595.)

[CONTINUED.]

And again, March 8th, 1590 :

"We have written many letters, but, it seems, few have come to your hands. We sail in the midst of these stormy waves; with no small danger; from which, nevertheless, it has pleased our Lord hitherto to deliver us. We have altogether, with much comfort, renewed the vows of the Society, according to our custom, spending some days in exhortations and spiritual conferences. *Aperimus ora et attraximus spiritum.* It seems to me that I see the beginnings of a religious life set on foot in England, of which we now sow the seeds with tears that others hereafter may, with joy, carry in the sheaves to the heavenly granaries.

"We have sung the canticle of the Lord in a strange land, and, in this desert, we have sucked honey from the rock, and oil from the hard stone. But these our joys ended in sorrow, and sudden fears dispersed us into different places: but, in fine, we were more afraid than hurt, for we all escaped. I, with another of ours, seeking to avoid Scylla, had like to have fallen into Charybdis; but, by the mercy of God, we passed between them both, without being shipwrecked, and are now sailing in a safe harbor.

"In another of mine, I gave an account of the late martyrdoms of Mr. Bayles and Mr. Horner, and of the edification which the people received from their holy ends. With such dew as these the church is watered, *ut in stillicidiis hujusmodi letetur germinans.* Psalm 51. We also look for the time—if we are not unworthy of so great a glory—when our day, like that of the hired servant, shall come. In the meanwhile, I recommend myself very earnestly to your Reverence's prayers, that the Father of lights may enlighten us, and confirm us with his principal spirit."

The troubles in which the noble family of Arundel was involved—of whose sufferings in the cause of the faith, we shall have occasion to speak in a future article—rendered the removal of Southwell necessary, and about the year 1591, he entered the family of a pious Catholic gentleman, of the name of Bellamy, who resided about seven miles from London, in the village of Uxenden, at the foot of Harrow-on-the-Hill. "Here," to use the language of Father More, one of the elegant historians of the Order, "he was enabled to recreate the burden of his solitary confinement in the city, by breathing the freer air of the country." But this freedom he was not long permitted to enjoy. The following was the cause that led to his apprehension. Anne, the elder daughter of Mr. Bellamy, was more remarkable for her zeal than her discretion. Being, against her parents' wish, on a visit to a family that had deserted the faith, she grew too communicative, and fell into the hands of a pursuivant, employed by the notorious

Topcliffe, a man, of whom it will be necessary to say a word in passing. So notorious was this tool of power, for the ferocity shown by him in the discharge of his odious office, that the term *Topplifcare*—to play the Topcliffe, was a familiar word, indicative of every species of barbarity. And yet this ruffian was warmly recommended, by the mitred heads of the establishment, was confidentially employed by Elizabeth's ministers, nay, what is more extraordinary than all, was, as we shall presently see, in familiar correspondence with Elizabeth herself. Bishop Whitgift, one of the privy council, says, in an official paper; "Care should be taken that Recusants come not into her Majesty's court; for which purpose, such *secreters-out* by secret inquisition, as Mr. Topcliffe, should be comforted [liberally rewarded]." One honest pen was, however, found, to portray the miscreant. "He is," says Sir Thomas Overbury, a pettifogger, who loves to be fishing in troubled waters, and baits his hook with the penal statutes. He is the blood-hound of the law; he hath a quick scent to track his game, and a deep mouth in the pursuit; nor does he quit till he has drawn blood."

This is in perfect keeping with an anecdote in Father Bartole's history. We cite his words: "Topcliffe, when a youth, had been passionately addicted to field-sports, and found no enjoyment comparable to the chase. In after life he was, however, heard to declare, that, to his taste, a single day spent in hunting down those vile traitors, the priests, was equal to all the years of his former amusement."

Into the hands of this ruffian did Anne Bellamy fall. Shut up in the gate-house, the common prison in Westminster, her courage failed her, nor was her virtue proof against the bad example and worse counsels of the inmates of the prison. They observed that her beauty had won upon the infamous Topcliffe, and they persuaded her to purchase her liberty at the price of her virtue. The abandonment of her religion was a natural consequence. Not long after, her charms having lost their attraction, her seducer married her to one Nicholas Jones, a creature of his own, and turnkey of the prison. This menial learning from his wife the fact that a priest was concealed in the house of her father, was resolved to turn his knowledge to account, by claiming the reward granted by the laws for the discovery and apprehension of a Jesuit. The now reckless daughter of the good Bellamy was induced to further the project; stimulated also by a revengeful feeling against her father, who, shocked at the disgraceful connection she had formed, had refused her a marriage portion. She was induced to write a letter to Father Southwell, pretending that she had become penitent for her past errors, and wished to make her confession; and that, if he would appoint an hour, she would come privately to him at her father's house. Unsuspecting of treachery, and rejoicing in an opportunity of reconciling a soul to God, Southwell was ready to meet her at the time and place appointed. Topcliffe, the chief promoter of the scheme, took with him a party of armed pursuivants, and set out with the young woman as his guide. It was evening when they reached Uxenden hall; the house was surrounded to prevent any one's escape, and admission was demanded. The fears and suspicions of the inmates had, however, been awakened, and Father Southwell had barely time to secrete himself in one of those hiding places, which are still

preserved in several old Catholic mansions, as memorials of a period when Protestantism and toleration did not go hand in hand. The usual contrivance was a concealed trap-door to a lower apartment, or a closet, the entrance to which was masked in the junctures of the wainscoting. In a recess of the latter description was Father Southwell concealed. Topcliffe sternly demanded of Mrs. Bellamy the surrender of the priest sequestered in her house. The good woman was summoning up her presence of mind, and attempting to frame some subterfuge, when judge of her horror at the sight of her faithless daughter who unblushingly stood forward, prepared to betray the dearest secret that her family could cherish! She pointed to the spot; the panel was burst open, and there stood the meek but undaunted servant of the Lord. The eager assailants had found the long-wished object of their search: they uttered a cry of joy, and pounced like birds of prey upon their quarry. Southwell was placed upon a horse, with his hands pinioned behind him, and amidst the insulting jeers and execrations of the rabble that gathered by the way, he was hurried to London.

The first place in which the good father was confined was Topcliffe's own house, where he lay for some weeks. The reason of this arbitrary proceeding, is stated to have been a desire to screen from the public eye the inhuman barbarities practised upon the priests. Murmurs had arisen at the undisguised use of the torture, and it was judged prudent not to irritate the public mind by indications of this kind within the walls of the prisons of the capitol. But as the tiger cannot readily forego its prey, permission was secretly given to Topcliffe, to continue the work of torture under his own roof. This will appear from the following extraordinary letter from this cool-blooded ruffian to the virgin queen.

"May it please your majesty—FRANCIS ROBERT SOUTHWELL, a dangerous conspirator, is taken. I have him here within my strong chamber in Westminster church-yard. I have made him assured for starting or hurting of himself, by putting upon his arms a pair of ———, and there and so, to keep him from view or conference with any, but Nicholas (Jones), the under-keeper of the Gate-house, and my boy: Nicholas being the man that caused me to take him.

"I have sent your majesty an examination, faithfully taken, and by him fully and suspiciously answered: and for what? Knowing the nature and doings of the man, may it please your majesty to see my simple opinions, constrained in duty to utter it.

"Upon this present taking of him, it is good forthwith to inform him to answer truly and directly; and so, to prove his answers true in haste, to the end that such as are deeply concerned in his treachery, may not have time to start, or make shift to use any means in common prisons: either to stand upon (?), or against the wall (which above all things succeedeth and hurteth not). will give warning. But if your highness' pleasure be to know anything in his heart, to stand against the wall, his feet standing upon the ground, and his hands but as high as he can reach against the wall like a trick at *Trenshemarm* (?) will enforce him to tell all; and the truth be proved by the sequel: first, the answer of him to the question of the countess of Arundel; and secondly that of Father Persons decyphereth him.

"May it please your majesty to consider, that I never did take so weighty a man, if he is rightly considered.

"Here at Westminster, with my charge, and the ghostly father, this Monday the 22nd of June, 1592.

Your Majesty's faithful servant,  
RICH. TOPCLIFFE."

\* This place is known for its school, which serves as one of the nurseries to the English Universities. It has obtained additional celebrity, of late years, as the place where Lord Byron was educated, and which he has immortalized in his poetry.